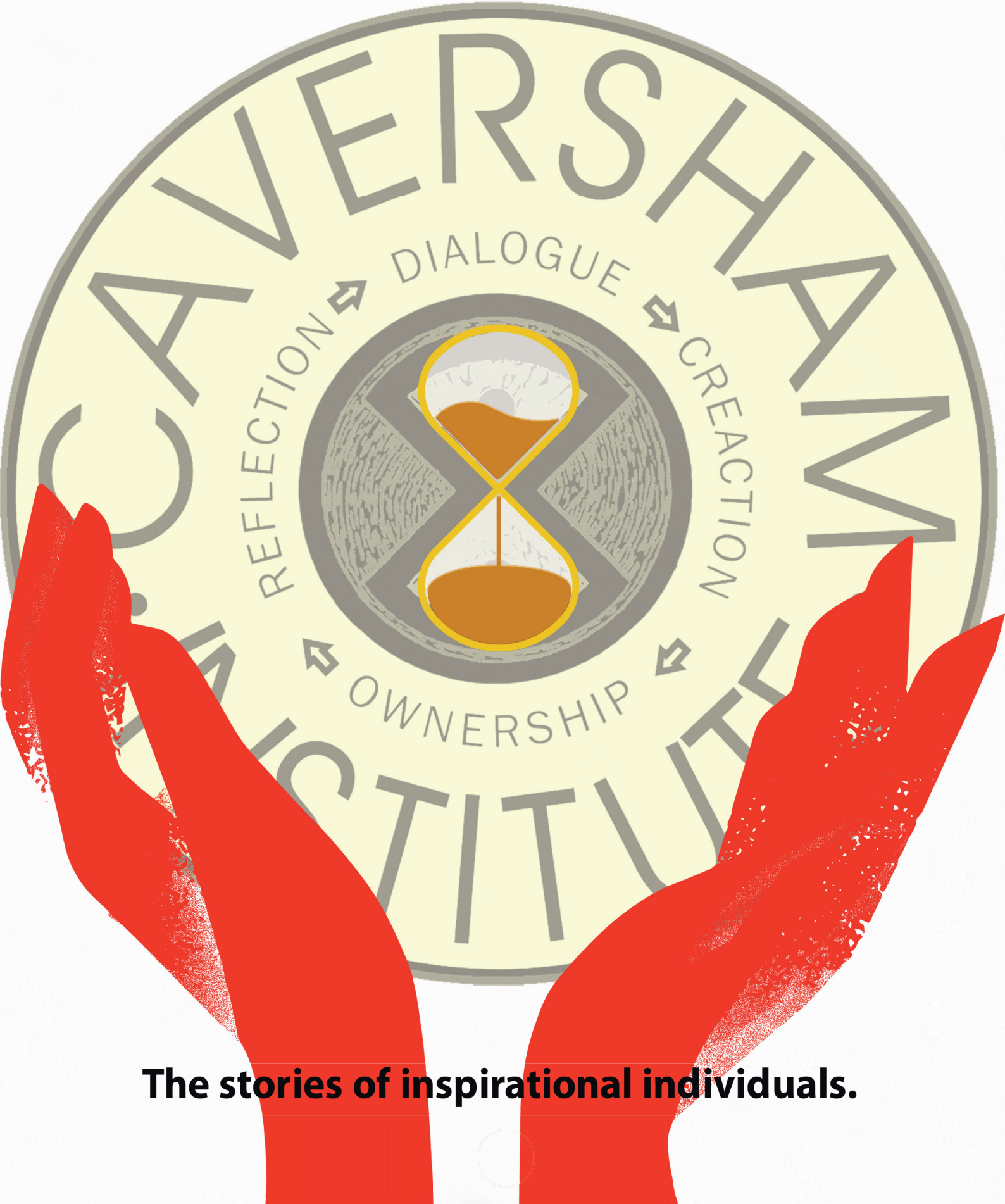


THE LEGACY BOOK



The stories of inspirational individuals.

FOREWORD

There comes a time in all our lives when it is appropriate to pause and reflect, to recognize how our personal vision and passions measure up to the reality of our lived lives. This reflection is not only a source of personal gratification but a powerful vehicle for inspiring others.

Achievements are measured against the particulars of the communities in which we live and serve, reflecting the needs and challenges whilst recognizing the ripple effect that gives breadth to our shared contribution as a source of inspiration for others.

During August, as we celebrate Woman's Month, the Caversham Education Institute is hosting reflective conversations with their founder, lecturers and former students, highlighting their powerful contribution in the field of early childhood development as well as noting their personal growth.

Each participant uses five topics to guide reflection and these provide personal insights and history, variety and depth, bearing witness to the empowerment of women through accessing paid teaching posts and opportunities to realize visions whose ripples from their individual endeavors reach not only young children but their families and communities.

These conversations with inspirational individuals will continue throughout the year, and we trust their stories will warm your hearts and their strength and resilience will prove that individual women have the power to impact far beyond their own expectations.

Dr Malcolm J. Christian
August 2023



The stories of inspirational individuals.





Jill Sachs Smith

“A legacy is not something we leave; it’s something we live.”

A lifetime daughter of Durban, Jill is a dynamic and inspirational woman of deep faith who has always passionately believed that an individual can make a difference within their own sphere and beyond. She truly represents Caversham Education Institute’s (CEI’s) value of inspiration in the individual and the individual as inspiration.

There are two objects which Jill believes encompass her as a person: her mother’s diamond engagement ring which connects her to her parents and their enduring love for each other and their children, and the Hourglass symbol and process which underpins her work. Like a diamond being formed, Jill endured enormous darkness and pressure at certain times of her life, but this led to her creating her vision of empowering others through the establishment of CEI. Thus, Jill treasures the ring and its connotations, believing the love it embodies and the care with which it was made allows the diamond to reflect the light of life.

The CEI Hourglass symbol and process is another pillar of Jill’s life, and she views it as a gift from her brother, Malcolm, whom she also sees as a human diamond who reflects light to others. Malcolm developed the Hourglass Process as part of a leadership course, and it continues to underpin all Jill’s work through its

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stages of Reflection, Dialogue, CreACTion™, and Ownership. Through these four steps, individuals move from reflection, through engagement, to action, and then ownership, turning the hourglass over from acquiring to giving, allowing transformation to take place within individuals and within groups.

In brief:

Reflection allows individuals to stop, to pause, to ask questions of themselves: Who am I as an individual? What do I bring? Where is the meaning and relevance of what I do?

Dialogue moves the process from reflection to interaction with others through active listening, allowing individuals to see themselves as others see them.

CreACTion™ combines Intention & action, the spirit of creativity, resulting in holistic action led by insights from the reflection and dialogue processes, moving from the theory to application.

Ownership is the fourth step in the process where participants take responsibility for themselves and go beyond their past to their empowered future. Ownership allows the individual to see themselves in both aspects: first, as passive victims of circumstance and then as transformed individuals engaging their innate leadership potential allowing for a unique and meaningful contribution to others (container becoming conduit). Together, these 4 steps allow for replenishment of the self as well as the ability to replenish others. The resulting transformation in individuals is deeply inspiring.

Jill trained as a high school art teacher, but a malignant melanoma left her looking for new options, and she became very involved with her children's preschool to the point where she was offered a job in 1979. She spent the next 5 years teaching Grade R, an invaluable experience considering what the future held.

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After 5 years as HOD at Westville Pre-primary she transferred to Woodlands Pre-Primary, where she was to remain for 5 years as principal, and keeping in mind this was during the Apartheid years so this was an all-white school, Jill felt the need to bring together women of different ethnicities to share their stories and support each other. This empathy and willingness to help others is a trait that Jill's mother had modelled, and it came naturally to Jill from an early age.

The women gathered once a month, and in 1990, Jill visited Umlazi where she met several talented women who had qualification certificates that had no value in the job market. Jill was determined to change this, and she began studying with the American High Scope Foundation so she could offer the course as further training to enable these women.

Circumstances placed obstacles in her way, but the women would not allow Jill to stop the course. Their encouragement led Jill to rewrite the basic High Scope course to suit ECD. Twenty-four women completed this two-year qualification, and Jill remains in touch with some of them, one of whom is Sandra de Sissing who went on to open a highly successful preschool section for an affluent international school in Turkiye. We were complemented by the higher grades as to just how independent and ready for school our little pre-schoolers were, so thank you, Jill, for everything!

Having been seconded to the KZN Department of Education as responsibility manager for the development of policy, structures, and systems for the phasing in of Grade R into the KZN education system, as well as being the KZN DoE representative at National level, Jill spent the next years working hard within the structures of officialdom, and in 2001 she was forced to 'mothball' her Scope program.

The stories of inspirational individuals.

When Jill took early retirement from the DoE in 2006, she returned to her passion for transformation and training ECD teachers, and she started CEI. At first, she was on her own, but now there are 32 people on the payroll, with seven of them being in Head Office, and Jill sees huge potential for the future with the Institute continuing to provide good teachers for young children. Although many people regard ECD as the lowest level of education and ECD teachers as no more than nannies/childminders, it is the first vital step in the educational process when maximum brain development takes place. This belief, coupled with Jill's passion for growing women in their own right, underpins Jill's commitment to ECD and her belief that the individual can transform a child's life with the ripples of this impacting the family and community in which each child lives.

CEI provides not only a documented and accredited qualification that allows women to earn a living or start their own business/ECD school, but it is also the vehicle for personal growth as demonstrated by the 1600 graduates of the Institute which has branches in KZN and the Cape. The students are encouraged to value themselves, and this self-esteem influences their own families as well as the lives and families of the children they teach.

As part of the course, students are required to journal every fortnight, an activity that makes the individual dig deep while developing journalling skills that continually ask 'Who am I and what do I do? What do I bring to the situation?' This takes the Caversham course far beyond teaching kids in a classroom, moving it into the realm of self-growth as well as the development of professional skills.

She has been surrounded by people who have inspired and supported her. Her mother, Nora, her brother, Malcolm, her friend and colleague of 26 years, Jabu Mtheku, her family and husband Ian and the amazing management team. Each of the facilitators and mentors, have enriched and encouraged, many of whom simply seem to 'arrive at the gate' when needed: something that Jill believes is a manifestation of her own deeply held Christian faith. Finally, Jill is inspired by the many students who come as women questioning their right to be in the world and who learn to value themselves as they step into their futures with self-confidence and pride. To Jill, this transformation is the golden ripple of Caversham and supports her passion for her work.



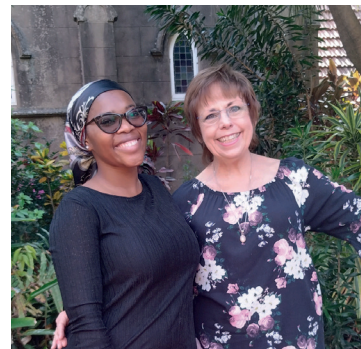
The stories of inspirational individuals.





Khwezi Mkhathini

"A leaf can't survive alone: it needs to be linked to the tree that brings it life."



These days, Khwezi Mkhathini is a self-assured young woman, comfortable with her place in the world, specifically as a mother and within the role she plays at Caversham Education Institute. But, go back to her early life, and this was not always the case. Khwezi grew up in a disadvantaged rural community where educating girls was not a priority as they were expected to marry at about 16. Her mother did not want this 'voiceless' future for her and saw to it that she did get an education, despite the stigma that this went against the traditional value of women in their community. Thanks to her mother and her own dedication, Khwezi holds a Bachelor of Social Sciences degree in Human Resources and Sociology from the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

A significant object Khwezi sees herself as, is a green leaf on the tree of Caversham; a green leaf that shows life and growth, but a leaf that requires, and draws strength from, the whole tree. The tree has to be watered and affirmed, which is what she believes her 11 years at CEI have done for her.

The stories of inspirational individuals.

When she first arrived at Caversham's tiny Fulham Corner office to help out with admin, Khwezi was anxious of the changes that comes with moving to the city, from answering the phone to having to converse with the caller, but this soon changed as she began to find and use her voice, enabled by Jill every step of the way. She believes Caversham helps women to find their voices, to speak and be heard, to expand and grow, and to become capable and independent.

As Khwezi grew in confidence, her role at CEI changed to the point where she has truly become a branch of the CEI tree, and Jill describes her as heading the main engine of the Institute, something Khwezi believes she can do because of Jill's training and guidance which led to her developing self-belief. She is now the ETDP SETA Skills Development Practitioner, some of her responsibilities include heading Quality Assurance projects such as verifications, accreditations, officiating qualifications and managing the graduation process for Caversham Education Institute.

Believing in managing and nurturing relationships professionally and personally, Khwezi has developed and maintains sound relationships, based on trust and respect, with the National Accrediting body, EDTP SETA. As a result, this department views CEI as a trusted partner in training ECD teachers globally.

Now that CEI is based at the spacious Manna House in Durban, Khwezi believes that Jill's original 2003 vision continues to manifest within the physical space, allowing for individual growth as well as collaboration through healthy interdependence. Khwezi's vision of the future is to see CEI continue to exemplify Jill's vision, with Manna House being a place of reformation and restoration, running on resources resulting from the faith Jill and Caversham hold so dear.

Khwezi feels her purpose is to help others find their voices and become strong, independent, and capable women who can take their skills into their communities. She does this through example, believing that if a girl from a rural background can do it, so can any woman. She describes her background as a place where "you cannot have a voice as a woman; you cannot make an impact as a woman". Instead, a woman must always be subservient. But, "Caversham taught me to have a voice: I moved from insecurity and self-doubt to having a voice and self-belief, something I see in a lot of women who come to Caversham. They rediscover their identity and ways to express themselves."

For Khwezi, the 'product' of her labour is seeing the students graduate, holding their qualification certificates in their hands and using the voices they have found through their experience at Caversham. She finds it a deeply moving privilege to witness the moment each student receives the official acknowledgment of their qualification. "Graduation day brings back the reason you exist. It gives me great satisfaction to see the transformation on that day. We fill in order for others to be filled, and it becomes a continuous process as the impact spreads. I was filled by Caversham, and now I fill and influence others who go on to influence their communities. This is my purpose in life."

Through its vision of inspiration in the individual and the individual as inspiration, CEI continues to inspire the teachers who impact Early Childhood Development in South Africa.

The stories of inspirational individuals.



Kumarie Mohan

“Be a survivor of circumstances, not a victim”



Kumarie was brought up with little attention to formal education, with her family focusing on skills to help run the family business. At the same time, her grandmother inculcated a sense of excellence in her, something for which she continues to be grateful. However, from an early age, she realised she wanted something different for herself, and this need was strengthened when, in 1997 and aged 20, she gave birth to her daughter, Jivee. Kumarie wanted more for herself and her daughter than the life into which she was born. Circumstances were to test her to her limit, but she emerged as tempered steel, with a heart of gold.

Kumarie has a treasured photo of her daughter taken on the day she brought Jivee home from the hospital. This image signified the start of a journey to achieve a different way of life from the rest of Kumarie’s family, and the results have been far-reaching for them both.

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Kumarie runs her own very successful preschool in Pietermaritzburg and lectures at Caversham Education Institute in addition to mentoring Caversham students. How it happened: In 1997, as a new mum, Kumarie saw an advert for a Caversham course of first-year lectures for Early Childhood Development teacher training, and she cut it out, placing it in a 'treasure' draw. It was to remain there until 2010, when she came across it again and contacted Caversham. Lorraine Christian was in the CEI office at the time, and she faxed Kumarie the application forms that were to make a significant change in Kumarie's life, although, at the time, she was terrified by the large, seemingly intimidating, class which took place at New England Primary School. Fast forward to 2023, and Kumarie now has a degree, her own school, and a good marriage.

Kumarie's entry into ECD teaching happened almost by accident when her daughter started preschool. Jivee refused to allow her mother to leave the premises, and eventually, the principal asked Kumarie to help out, first as a general helper and then as a relief teacher. The principal also asked her to start an Aftercare class, something that fuelled Kumarie's passion for ECD, so much so that she did the Intech ECD course.

She applied for another ECD job, but the conditions at the school were far from ideal, and she left after 2 years. It didn't take long for the parents of her previous class to start calling her, asking her to take on their preschoolers, and soon she had 7 children. It wasn't ideal as she and her daughter were living with her brother at the time, so Kumarie found an abandoned house, next to a shebeen, rented it from the municipality, and, along with her family, set about renovating it.

Once this heaven was up to standard, Kumarie opened the doors, and the kids boarded with her from Monday to Friday, but the environment was far from ideal, and she finally closed the boarding section and looked for new premises, away from the shenanigans of the shebeen. The 'new' school has now been running for 16 years, with pre-Covid numbers of 96 enrolled children. Post Covid, this is reduced, but numbers are steadily rising.

At first, Kumarie's purpose was to change the trajectory of her own and her daughter's lives. She has done this with astounding success, and now she feels her purpose is to help others by giving back to Caversham which she believes helped her achieve her successful 'different life'. This sense of purpose led to her lecturing and mentoring at Caversham, with her mentorship focusing on rural black women who want to start their own schools. She also creates new relationships to help other CEI graduates find appropriate jobs that pay well, thus empowering the women financially as well strengthening their self-esteem.

Kumarie believes Jill, Jabu, Tina and Judy have been catalysts in her life, helping her achieve her 'different-life dream' which has taken her far from the family business. She has also been a beneficiary of Caversham ripples through the inspiration provided by Carrie, Vanessa, and her students. Now, Kumarie is giving back and creating Caversham ripples of her own in the true spirit of inspiration in the individual and the individual as inspiration.

In Jill's words, "Kumarie has a heart of gold: Caversham is privileged to have her as a graduate, lecturer, and mentor, looking beyond herself to help those in lesser circumstances."

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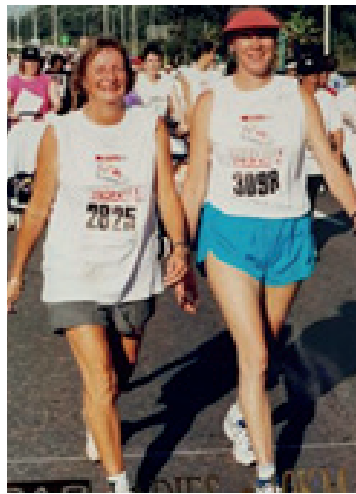




Carry Paterson

"We are linked but not ranked."

-Gloria Steinem:



Carry Paterson's life is underpinned by the belief that no one person is better than another; that we all have a role and a place in life that is equally important although everyone is different.

Carry believes all things are possible, but nothing is achieved without putting in the effort. Proof of this is the way she took up marathon running, an activity that lasted for twenty years despite nay-sayers telling her she would never succeed. How wrong she proved them! This demonstrating the same dedication, determination, and whole-hearted effort she has put into Early Childhood Education and the Caversham Education Institute over the years.

The stories of inspirational individuals.

At one point, Carry was training one of the five groups who were all housed under one roof at Nkulisa, and although having 100 students in one place was wonderful for interaction between all concerned, the noisy venue was not ideal.

In March 2020, the COVID lockdown brought to an end all physical meetings, and WhatsApp messages, calls, and meetings became the lifeline for continued studies. Jill held weekly Zoom meetings for the lecturers to keep everyone motivated, although some students dropped out for various reasons. Once the lockdown ended, Nkulisa was no longer available to Caversham Educational Institute, and Carry's group moved to the Cancer Association head office in Durban and subsequently to Caversham's beautiful new training venue in The Manna House, Musgrave Durban.

As with most Caversham lecturers, Carry is dedicated to ensuring Pre School Teachers themselves have the tools to guide children through their early educational experiences. Carry's passion for Early Childhood Education has spanned more than 50 years, starting with her first job, at age 17, as an assistant at Three Oaks Nursery School, where she did everything from mixing paints to cleaning bathrooms, being paid a mere R10 a month.

Her experience at Three Oaks convinced Carry to enrol in the 3-year course at the Training College for Nursery School Teachers, Johannesburg. After graduating, she held posts at various schools, including Woodlands Pre Primary in Durban where she first met Cecily White in 1976. It was in March 2010 when Cecily encouraged Carry to come and observe at Caversham Educational Institute. After that Carry joined Jill in Pietermaritzburg. Meeting Jill and the long journey to Pietermaritzburg was all the inspiration that Carry needed. Jill had started this group in 2007, with Jill doing the lectures for 8 students on Wednesday afternoons, using New England Pre-Primary School premises.

At the time, Carry felt utterly lacking in confidence, but Jill's belief in her and her words encouraged her. "You'll be surprised at how good a lecturer you will be." In no time, Carry, herself, began running the Saturday morning workshops, further fulfilling her purpose to be involved in the Early Childhood Education.

Carry views Caversham as a 'big supporting machine', driven by "Jill, the Champion Visionary". The students and their needs are considered on an individual basis as well as an overall group. Carry sees first-hand the effect the support and encouragement have on the students, who then pass along the same support to others in their own families and communities. Many students have started their own businesses, becoming Principals and Teachers with their Caversham NFQ5 Qualification. This, in itself, is a powerful achievement, but, additionally, the students all attest to the profound personal growth they all experience as they move through their studies at the Institute. It is the journalling component that fills Carry's "Hourglass". Fifty years of Calligraphy, writing and encouraging adds to the ripples of Caversham Educational Institute. "Fill your paper with the breathings of your heart" William Wordsworth

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Jabu Mtheku

*“If I can
do it coming
from that
background, so
can others!”*



Jabu has a long history with Jill Sachs-Smith, and theirs has become a deeply engaged sisterhood since Jabu first met Jill in 1997, but her life began in very different circumstances to those she has today. Part of a family of 8 living in one room in in Clermont township, Jabu was privileged to have a strong mother, who, albeit herself only educated to grade 3, insisted that her children should all attend school and not be trapped in the endless ‘childminding’ allotted to other children in the area. While the schools were not ideal, and Jabu remembers there could be up to 100 children in a classroom, she believes her background motivates her and deepens her own understanding of life: “If I can do it coming from that background, so can others!”

Jabu is a woman of strong faith that supports her everyday life. She has two significant objects that underpin her outlook: a triangular stone and a snail’s shell. First, the triangular stone signifies support from two sides to each of the three points, with support from others keeping the individual grounded. On the other hand, the shell

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offers retreat and protection. As a snail leaves a translucent trail, so Jabu hopes to leave a mark on the lives of the people with whom she interacts while at the same time having a protective shell to retreat to when feeling vulnerable.

Currently, Jabu is an essential part of the CEI Central office team at Manna House, located on Durban's Berea, where she has a deep understanding of the organisation's goals in uplifting people by training them to be successful ECD teachers and businesspeople in their own right. To fully develop her understanding of the course offered to students by CEI, Jabu undertook to study for three years and complete the national diploma and acquired unique insight from a student's perspective.

In 1997, Jabu had left her job at the bank to find new avenues in life, and a mutual friend connected her with Jill, who, at the time, was working at the Head Office for the Department of Education, setting up the structures and systems for phase-in Grade R and needed help typing the endless documents. This connection was to be serendipitous for both women. While Jabu knew nothing of ECD at the time, their working relationship and friendship evolved, and she became the technical support for the KZN provincial branch of the DoE where her love for working with people was cemented.

In 2004, Jabu left the DoE to join the Caversham Centre for Artists and Writers (CCAW) team, run by Malcolm and Ros Christian. These were special times for Jabu as she worked with women from rural areas who had little education but were passionate about their activities, especially those involving the outreach programmes in Mpophomeni and the Masabelaneni (let us share) Centre located at CCAW. Released from the structures of the DoE, Jabu was able to tap into her love of working with people. In 2013, Jabu once again joined Jill in the workplace, this time as part of the CEI team based at Fulham Bakery in Durban's Glenwood. Her job description was a work in progress, evolving organically in the overall Caversham tradition.

Over the years, and embodying her significant objects, Jabu has been and continues to be both a rock and a refuge for others, "hoping and trusting I have influenced someone in a positive way." In doing this, Jabu believes that both the Caversham family and her Christian family have been enormously impactful in her life.

Apart from the contribution Jabu has made to others, she participated in the development of the Hourglass Process while she was working at the CCAW. This process informs the work done by CEI where reflective conversations move on to become dialogic discussions that add value to individuals and groups by leading to creative action/CreActiontm.

Along the way, Jabu has interacted with many people who have inspired and encouraged her as she worked in different communities. She believes we should all be lifelong learners, benefiting from the diversity that surrounds us. Among those who have influenced and inspired her are Jill, Malcolm and Ros, and the late artist and programme administrator, Gabi Nkosi, with whom Jabu worked at the CCAW.

Jabu looks to the future which she believes is 'blindingly bright' for CEI and all involved with it, as it is based on Jill's original God-given vision in 2003.

Jill: "I am so grateful to God for placing Jabu in my path and for her constant support and loyalty throughout this journey."

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Sue Bonney



Making a difference: Inspiration in the individual, and the individual as inspiration. Sue Bonney is a highly experienced and dedicated teacher who continues to devote her career to Early Childhood Development.

Sue was gifted edelweiss by German nuns when she was the 100th baby to be born at the Catholic Nursing Home in uMtata, and it has come to symbolize much of Sue's life as a resilient outdoor person who thrives on simplicity, creation and challenges.

Having completed her teacher training in 1975 Sue was sent to KwamBonambi Pre-Primary School, KZN, where she continues to teach. Sue's aim is to support the development of early learning in children so that they grow their potential and are ready to enter the formal school curriculum once they reach Grade R. To achieve this with the children, Sue's pedagogy relies on learning through play. For

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this to happen, she believes preschool teachers need specialized training, and this is where she aligns with Caversham Education Institute.

In 2003, Sue attended Jill's Scope workshops when it was a part time, two-year foundation course where students earned a certificate in Early Childhood preschool teaching. At that time, four years before any accreditation of Scope, there was no National Framework of Qualifications, but Scope had been born out of a demand for more training by preschool teachers, and fortnightly workshops were held in an informal setting in Jill's Westville home.

Back at KwamBonambi, Sue took the High Scope course and set out, with very little cash, to make something from nothing by building on her own courage, passion, vision and tenacity. She developed her class activities along the Scope lines, attracting more children in the process. Once she needed help, she brought in two long time colleagues, Pam and Debbie, and as of 2022, Sue has three Grade R classes.

Over the years, Sue has maintained her links with Jill and Caversham Education Institute, and Kwambonambi Preschool has become a model training school where students from CEI come for practical assessment and to better understand the concept of good active learning and inquiry-based teaching.

As a result, Sue has made Kwambonambi Pre-Primary school 'home' to many ECD teachers as she strives to make a difference through excellent, practical guidance for early years teachers, but without making them into mini-Grade R teachers. Early Childhood Development stands separate from the formal school curriculum, but it is an essential foundation on which children can build their own potential. In further testament to the success of Sue's undertaking, all the 2022 Grade 7 prefects at the local Kwambonambi Primary School are 'graduates' of Kwambonambi Preschool.

Through Sue, and other teachers like her who have also experienced CEI training and carried it forward into their own schools, CEI and Jill's influence has multiple reverberations throughout the Early Childhood development area. Two women whose lives have been changed as a result are Sibonsile and Nondumiso.

Sibonsile came across the CEI course quite by accident as she sold oranges at her small table on the side of the N2 North. She got chatting to a couple of her customers and asked where they were going. It so happened they were Bongzi and Khanya on their way to a training workshop Kwambonambi Preschool. They talked with great enthusiasm about the course, and Sibonsile listened with interest, but without a plan to follow up on this news. She happily continued selling oranges to make a living until one day she thought about what had got the students so excited as a way of making a living as well as helping others.

Sibonsile now has a pre-school of her own, supported by the Department of Education, and she has an enrolment of 70 children. This success story was not an easy one, and she did a lot of back and forth, missing lectures to sell oranges to sustain herself and her family, but with much encouragement from the staff and other students, Sibonsile succeeded in changing her own life as well as those of the children who attend her school.

Nondumiso's success story had entirely different roots to those of other students, as

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she arrived at the Kwambonambi preschool gates looking for a job. It happened to be during registration for a new intake of CEI students, and Nondumiso found herself presented with a set of registration forms by Sue, which she duly completed and handed in. During lockdown, there were not enough children to open Kwambonambi Preschool, but Nondumiso continued to come in, completing her studies.

Nondumiso is now working towards her degree through SANTS, a private higher education institute, by first taking their Diploma in Grade R teaching where she is achieving over 70% for all assignments and gaining 97% on her teaching practical. Sue, her team, and Kwambonambi Pre-Primary school are just one of the ripples Caversham Education Institute continues spread into communities through its vision of inspiration in the individual and the individual as inspiration.

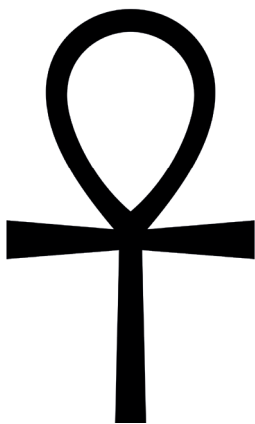
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Phindile Khumalo

“I believe in Caversham and its values; I would choose Caversham over and over again.”



Meeting Phindile today, it is hard to imagine her as anything other than the successful, confident woman and mother she is, but her journey has been tough, filled with innumerable obstacles that she believes have allowed for her personal growth, making her stronger in the process.

A second-born daughter, Phindi was raised in Clermont, Durban, by her father and grandfather. Although her grandmother died when Phindi was young, she had already instilled a deep faith in her, and this faith is fundamental in her everyday life. Her Granny was a nurse and a Sunday school teacher and taught her the Psalms, with Psalm 139 being Phindi’s mainstay – Wonderfully and fearfully made.

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Phindi sets great store by an ankh that symbolizes creation and the path of life and that provides her with a sense of security. From 2007 when I became a teenage mom I got lost in a way that all my dreams of becoming a nurse were wiped away. All my relatives told me that I had no future. Then in 2009 while volunteering at my church Pre-Primary school in Clermont, called Abantwana BeNkosi, a supervisor advised me to apply at Caversham Education Institute so that I could have better understanding of the early childhood industry.

During this time, Phindi was supported by family members and friends. Her father stood by her through her pregnancy, resisting social pressure to throw her out. Although her grandfather passed away when she was in grade 12, Phindi believes his calm character influenced her own approach to life. She was also mentored by two of her Sunday school teachers, Mr Motsabi and Miss Dudu Mkhize, who saw her potential and urged her to make something of herself instead of taking her own life.

As a result of their encouragement, Phindi enrolled at Caversham in 2012, and this is when she and Jill first met. It was a very hard year for the young teenage mum, but she was determined to make something of herself. At the same time as studying, she was nursing her father, who had developed full-blown Aids. Thankfully, she found the lecturers were all warm and encouraging. Carry Paterson was her specific lecturer, and Phindi is grateful to her for making things accessible and practical as she dealt with her studies as well as the complexities of her personal situation.

In her second year at Caversham, Phindi's aunt committed suicide; another traumatic experience for the young woman. However, at the end of her third year, she graduated with a National Diploma in ECD, and her father, having pulled through illness, came to her graduation. Phindi notes that he was the only remaining one of his childhood friends - all the others of his generation had passed away. His presence was cause for even more celebration than her being the first of her siblings to achieve a tertiary education.

Phindi believes her purpose is to help others, but this realization was solidified through an extreme event when she lost her much longed-for second baby in 2021. Her maternity leave was a period of recovery and healing, but instead of descending into depression, Phindi actively made a decision to achieve something. In doing this, she focused on the Hourglass process of Reflection, Dialogue, CreAction™ and Ownership. This is when the Caversham Mentorship Programme was born.

Because of her willingness to help others, Phindi was frequently asked for advice by

students and teachers, covering a wide range of topics they encountered in the ECD activities. This is where she felt she could add value, and she set about developing and implementing a programme to train others in dealing with the variety of challenges that arise. This programme has become a mainstay of CEI.

In addition to her family, the Caversham family and Mr Motsabi, Phindi was inspired by Mrs Cahill, the 80+-year-old principal at Phindi's first teaching post. Mrs Cahill taught her professional patience and to look on her role as serving the children in their development.

Jill: Phindi makes a huge contribution to Caversham as head mentor. She is a natural leader who is accepted and respected by the other mentors who are all dynamic, confident women.

Phindi remains passionate about teaching little people, and firmly believes "you get out what you put in". She plans to open her own school when the time is right, and because she is motivated, inspired and inspiring, this is bound to become a reality. She envisions it as being a model school where Caversham students can build their own confidence and teaching skills.

In Jill's words, " Phindi is a constant blessing for Caversham."

The stories of inspirational individuals.





Grace Khanyile



A young woman who has overcome seemingly insurmountable troubles, Grace is an inspiring person who shares the light she has found in the face of many challenges. At the time of writing, she is undergoing rehabilitation after suffering a stroke. The content that follows in her own words, written from her hospital bed, but there is no hint of self-pity or hopelessness; instead, there is positivity and focus. She will overcome!

Grace selected a mouthpiece used in CPR as her significant object, because she sees it as both life-giving and self-protection: it revives and resuscitates and provides hope for the future.

"I would like to express my gratitude to Caversham Education Institute and its founder, Jill Sachs-Smith, for not giving up on me and helping me improve myself and my self-esteem and bringing myself and the whole team to the realization that Early Childhood Development is beyond a career that one chooses for the sake of making a living. It is about going beyond; by realizing you are building up a human whom you can guide and show how to get into a routine of being true to themselves, build their own self-esteem, and foster their own resilience; to teach children, as young as they are, how to survive life and its hardships.

The stories of inspirational individuals.

I was taught how to get children to avoid phobias and believe in themselves so that they could breeze through life regardless. All this because I was nurtured and seen past being just a student, but a student who has a personal life, a not so rosy background but is fortunate enough to realize there were positives that could outweigh all the negatives, that have made my life somewhat a misery, and become an inspiration. I got to Caversham damaged and feeling I was never going to recover from all that I have been through but through the affirmations I was taught by them, I was able to bounce back each time because Caversham actually cared for me as a unique individual and someone who can become a positive inspiration to other students and learners who will be taught by me.

When I look back, I realize I have come far and I'm still moving forward as a better individual at 34 from that child being a black African from the apartheid era where there was a lot of hate. I was the only black learner in my class in 1994 with all the other children a fair colour.

I was molested as a child, and I suffered depression due to the hardships of life and not being understood by people of the same race in my neighbourhood. Then I was raped as an adult. I became suicidal; however, I survived and was the youngest in a group of mature Caversham students who all had English as a home language, which was also the language of instruction. They were more mature and naturally responsible as they had been through other courses that emphasized the importance of ECD, while they were also old enough and knew what responsibility meant since they were mostly married and aware of how to take care of children.

Today I am HOD of a pre-school that has the most unfortunate children as a majority as they are from an informal settlement; I am a mentor for Caversham students who are training as ECD teachers; and I am a locum lecturer whenever a lecturer is sick. All this is because of the time and energy that was used and invested in me during my years of ECD training at Caversham. I must mention that through Caversham's kind treatment and the values that have been instilled in me, I have gained confidence in the industry and still have a passion for teaching young children, even after my present situation. Caversham has taught me a lot of skills and given me immense knowledge that has provided me with the resilience to bounce back from any situation. Also the fact that my pre-school principal, Judy Scholz, later became my diploma lecturer and inspired me to become a better teacher and HOD.

Thank you, Jill, and thank you, Caversham team for looking at me as part of your family rather than just another employee. I appreciate you!"

In 2022, Jill received this joyous message from Grace:

..because all the teachings and the modelling of a good Samaritan is mostly learnt from you and I'm reminded of this every day I wake up to take that first breathe, every time I advise parents/family, every time I have to wake up to those helpless and vulnerable children I teach and every time I stand in front of students that would like to grab the insight and knowledge that I received from you and still passing on...I just wanted to remind you that you are not just a super hero that is behind my salary paycheck but that you are far more and have touched many more hearts that you had anticipated you will reach by this time.

Caversham is grateful to Grace and all the inspiring people in its family who continue to send ripples of inspiration and hope throughout communities in the face of challenges.

The stories of inspirational individuals.